

Inside the news—briefly

CIA chief attacks book by former agency man

Washington

President Carter's top intelligence adviser went into print Wednesday to launch a counter-attack on a book critical of the CIA's role in the closing days of the Vietnam war.

Adm. Stansfield Turner, director of the CIA, wrote in an article published by the Washington Post that the agency had the right to review the book, "Decent Interval," because the author, Frank Snepp, had signed a specific agreement to that effect as part of the terms of his employment with the agency.

In his recently published book, Mr. Snepp charges that the American evacuation of South Vietnam in April, 1975, was a chaotic disaster brought on by major U.S. intelligence failures in Saigon and Washington. Admiral Turner said Mr. Snepp had broken his oath and violated a written obligation to send his manuscript to the CIA for review.

At stake, the CIA chief said, is a fundamental issue for society.

"If the society cannot trust the judgment of its public servants regarding what should or should not be withheld from the public, then the society can in fact have no secrets at all," he said.

Admiral Turner added: "We need less encumbrance from national self-flagellation over the past and more interest in how we can achieve a workable balance between necessary secrecy on the one hand and oversight on the other."